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Activities of Indian Freedom Revolutionaries and the Rising Sun

Pallavi BHATTE

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose responded to the call of the hour and with him rose the Indian patriots both within and without their country. Thus was the Provisional Government of Free India created and the foundation of Indian independence laid. The Japanese Government have already declared to the world that they will extend every cooperation and assistance for the independence of India. ¹⁾

Emphasizing the philosophy of the Japanese imperial concept of *Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere* ²⁾, the Japanese Premier, General Hideki Tojo introduced Subhas Chandra Bose as the Head of State of *Provisional Government of Free India, Arzi Hukumat-e-Azad Hind* ³⁾ and officially asserted the recognition of the Indians' demand for a sovereign nation in a public gathering on an international platform. This official announcement was made on November 5, 1943, at the *Assembly of the Greater East Asiatic Nations* or *Daitoa kaigi* in the National Diet Building, Tokyo. The Assembly intended to strengthen the solidarity among Asian nations to liberate Asia from Western colonialism in the form of mutual co-operation and mutual assistance. This statement by Premier Tojo was a unique public statement made in favor of Indian independence, by the Head of any State until then.

Subhas Chandra Bose's attempt to liberate India with the help of the Japanese was his last and final attempt before his controversial ⁴⁾ death in an air crash on August 18, 1945 while en route to Tokyo. The alliance forged by Subhas Chandra Bose was the result of cumulative effort of a large network of revolutionaries in the transnational space along with the participation of diasporic Indians and supporters. Nevertheless, the history of the revolutionary movement that demanded India's independence beyond Indian boundaries is a subject that has received scarce attention.

The struggle for India's freedom, which spans over ninety years, has so far, been studied from a wide variety of perspectives. Historiography of the study of the Indian national movement falls broadly under four major categories. The Imperialist School of historians popularly known as the Cambridge School offers the study from the perspective of the British Empire.⁵⁾ Moreover, the Marxist School⁶⁾, the Nationalist historiography⁷⁾, and the new trend of Subaltern Studies⁸⁾, offer different perspectives from the Indian side. The Imperialist School represented by the bureaucrats naturally does not include the revolutionary movement as a part of the nationalist movement and simply views them as a generalized category of "terrorists". For instance, the 1918 *Sedition Committee Report*; Thomas Babington Macaulay's Education policy of 1883, falls under this category. Further, while the Nationalist School adopts a holistic approach, its all-inclusive policy mainly concentrates on the mainstream movement with the formation of the *Indian National Congress in 1885* as the central theme. Therefore, the Nationalist School's adoption of a narrow INC oriented viewpoint was exclusive of all those revolutionaries not holding membership of the INC or those choosing divergent paths from the INC, thus leaving them marginalized.

This paper argues that the revolutionaries demanding Indian independence, who have been generalized and viewed as "terrorists," are indeed a group of radical, extremist nationalists and not so called "terrorists." As a working definition, this paper categorizes the extremist revolutionaries as a group that demanded *Purna Swaraj*⁹⁾ without any compromise even if it meant the use of an armed resistance.

Further, in spite of undergoing exhaustive research, those revolutionaries who left the borders of British India are confined within a narrow framework, which tends to view the revolutionaries with an 'inward' perspective by treating them as individuals abroad, performing activities which were aspired to reverberate at home in British India. This approach merely referred to them as "Indian revolutionaries abroad."¹⁰⁾ A larger framework inclusive of both internal as well as external activities is necessary to understand the global range of India's freedom movement and the role of revolutionaries in its entirety.

Here the dynamics of the adopted homes of the respective revolutionaries as key contributors requires to be inspected not only at the individual level there, but also alongside forces that motivated and influenced other revolutionaries in their adopted homes. This relation of interconnectedness between revolutionaries within the transnational space finally needs to be merged with the ultimate influence that was targeted towards British occupied India. By adopting a larger framework the forces within the transnational space, the flows of people, exchanges of resources, and ideas that mobilized the Indian independence movement are visible.

Perhaps the time has come to view resistances from different corners of the world in conjunction with their counterparts, viewed under the larger framework of the Indian freedom

struggle in the transnational space. As the title suggests, specifically, this paper will focus on the Indian freedom movement with relation to Japan as a part of a study of the global range of the role of Indian revolutionaries and diaspora towards the Indian freedom movement in the transnational space. Covering a span of forty-five years until the end of World War II, this study will attempt to trace the footprints left behind by Indian revolutionaries in the transnational space having a base in or a link to Japan. The study also attempts to access the nature of the relationship the Indian nationalists had with Japan and the Japanese reactions to their actions in brief.

I: REVOLUTIONARIES IN JAPAN AND THEIR NETWORKS PRIOR TO THE ARRIVAL OF *NETAJI*

Although Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose forged an alliance with Imperial Japan in the 1940s, the seeds for revolutionaries' activities were sown from as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. Japan had emerged as a dominant power in Asia and had attracted the attention of Indian social reformers, especially in the final decade of the nineteenth century. "Leaders of new regions and spiritual movements in Bengal, people like P.C. Mozoomdar¹¹⁾ and Swami Vivekananda¹²⁾ had visited Japan in the 1880's and 1890's were greatly impressed by what they saw there and urged Indian young men to visit Japan. Japanese advancement in the field of science and technology attracted many Indian students who went in large numbers for further studies."¹³⁾

For instance, one such person of Indian origin who seemed to have traces of involvement in anti-British activity is Puran Singh. As a young aspiring student who had just passed his First Arts Examination in 1899 from D.A.V College, Lahore, Puran Singh had grabbed a sponsorship offered by a rich local to Japan for higher education. In the year 1900, Singh enrolled in the *Tokyo Imperial University* as a student of pharmaceutical chemistry, geared up with skills of Japanese and German languages.¹⁴⁾ Although Puran Singh was in Japan for only two years, he had not wasted the opportunity of being a "free" man in a "free land." Besides excelling in his academic work in Japan, Puran Singh organized an *Indo-Japanese Club* in Tokyo and started an English revolutionary journal '*Thundering Dawn*' to focus on the plight of Indian masses under the British rule. Puran Singh also met other Indian revolutionaries in Japan, for example, one Kulkarni and Rama Kant Roy from Bengal.¹⁵⁾ Singh influenced by the teachings of Buddhism, became a monk and then a follower of the philosophy of the Vedas after a chance encounter with the mathematician turned Vedantist Swami Ram Tirtha¹⁶⁾ who was on a lecture tour of Japan in February 1902.¹⁷⁾ Puran Singh's spiritual later life, which gave him exposure to large crowds, is well known. As for Singh's activities in Japan, not much recorded documentation is available. However, what we do know is that when he landed in Calcutta, Puran Singh was captured and

imprisoned by the British authorities on grounds of suspicion and his parents somehow managed his release and whisked him off to Lahore.¹⁸⁾ Finer details of the suspicion are not available. However, the fact that he was immediately captured and imprisoned on his arrival in India signifies some probable sensitive tip-offs that the British authorities had obtained prior to his arrival. Furthermore, whether the scope of his activities involved just the Japanese arena or a much wider area is debatable.

Like Puran Singh, many students chose Japan as their destination after England and the United States. Mostly from Maharashtra, Bengal, Baroda, Madras and Mysore, in 1906 students as many as fifty were in Tokyo alone. They chose *Tokyo Higher Technological School*, *the Tokyo and Kyoto Imperial Universities and Sapporo Agricultural College*. Indian students had formed associations “to facilitate the cultivation of friendship between Japanese and Indians and other oriental students studying in Japan and to help the Indians in their career while in that country.” One such association was the “Oriental Youngman’s Association” started in 1900 whose aim and objects were published by the Association in *Japan Gazette* 1900. The Association served as a platform for increased interaction between Japanese, Indian as well as other Asian students. The purpose of fostering friendships among students mentioned therein was to empower them to, foremost, “exchange their knowledge and ideas.” Secondly to, “encourage and help each other in forming their character” to enable them to “equip themselves properly against the time” and when finally called upon after completion of their studies they will serve “to cooperate in the great task of the enlightenment and development of the whole east.” The Association also attracted members from a few influential Japanese individuals who were interested in striking friendship with India.¹⁹⁾ The activities of Indian students in Japan in this way evolved from cultural exchanges born out of academic pursuits to exchanges loaded with nationalistic ideas. This was especially during a time when rapid military build-up was going up in Japan in contrast to the situation back in India.

Another Indo-Japanese Association in Tokyo was a result of encouragement from “leaders of modern Japan including celebrities such as Count Shigenobu Okuma, one of the four ‘elder statesmen’ (the Genro); the founders of industrial enterprise in Japan, ie., Mr. Kondo, President of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha, and Baron Takahashi, President of the Yokohama Specie Bank.”²⁰⁾ One of the chief supporters of this association was H.D. Tata and G. N. Potdar had also played a large part in the establishment of this Association. The aims and objectives of the Association were firstly to “guide and help ... Indian students and others proceeding to Japan for study or business,” and secondly, to provide building premises to house a library for Indian students. “To create and foster in the intelligent classes of Japan” by inculcating in them an “interest in Indian students, esp. in Indian commerce and industries, so as to devise means for developing commerce and

industry in India.” Fourth on the list is to “spread the knowledge of Indian vernaculars among the educated class of Japan.” Lastly, the Association’s aim was to “encourage intercourse between the two countries so as to bring the people into closer contact.”²¹⁾

Some references point to Maharashtra’s revolutionary connection with Japan as early as 1901. Aravind Ganachari mentions that B.G. Tilak’s close associate “Vasukaka Joshi... had wished to establish connections with Japan.”

The Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 was the first successful Asian challenge to White colonialism, something that was unimaginable until then. Having been the first indigenous Asian state to defeat a European power in a modern war this generated a ray of hope and considerable prestige in the eyes and imagination of Indian radicals. Alongside the formations of community associations and societies, an *India House* was opened in Tokyo in 1907. This served as a residence for sixteen Indian students the following year and went on to accept students from other Asian countries, aiming to build a broad foundation for Indian nationalism based on pan-Asiatic values.

The “Tokyo-*India House*” was started by G. N. Potdar and others and was built on similar guidelines as the *India House* in Highgate London built by Shyamji Krishnavarma.

India House in London was home to a group of revolutionary Indian students. Krishnavarma had started a scholarship scheme to encourage Indian students to study in London and to select prospective recruits for revolutionary activities. He also published an English journal called the *Indian Sociologist* from *India House* in London, which was labelled seditious and therefore banned by the British government. In February 1905, Krishnavarma along with other revolutionary Indian expatriates such as Madame Bhikaji Cama, S. R. Rana, and Lala Lajpat Rai founded the Indian Home Rule Society at the *India House*, which was a rival organization to the British Committee of Congress here. *India House* soon became a hub for political activism and meeting place for radical Indian nationalists.

Branches of the Tokyo-*India House* were opened in Kyoto, Osaka, and in almost all industrial cities of Japan. Besides many Indian business firms in Japan seem to have lent their support to the activities of Indian students. According to a “police report a list of 27 Indian firms in Tokyo and Yokohama alone” contributed.²²⁾ The report mentions that both the *India House* as well as these firms gave loans to the students. And these firms provided lodging and boarding to visitors to Japan. Students in Japan were in contact with the London-*India House* and longed for a leader like Shyamji Krishnavarma.

Among those, frequenting the London *India House* was Mohamed Barkatullah, who had gone to England for the purpose of higher education at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1897, Barkatullah was seen attending meetings of the *Muslim Patriotic League* in London where he

mingled with other revolutionaries. In February 1909, Barkatullah²³⁾ after spending a year in America left for Japan where he had accepted a teaching position as “Professor of Hindustani in the *School of foreign languages* in Tokyo”.²⁴⁾

Prior to taking up the post of Professor of Hindustani at the *Tokyo School of Foreign Languages* in March 1909, Barkatullah in New York had developed contacts and links with prominent Irish nationalists who showed an inclination towards the emancipation of India. It was at this time, on the lines of Krishnavarma's *India House*, that Barkatullah along with Samuel Lucas Joshi founded the *Pan-Aryan Association* in 1906 in New York. In this endeavor, they gained the support of George Freeman (aka Fitzgerald), John Devoy and others; and the first meeting of this organization was published in the *Gaelic American* of March 2, 1907.²⁶⁾

During his time at the *Tokyo School of Foreign Languages*, Barkatullah simultaneously carried out the responsibility of the East Asian distributorship of the *Indian Sociologist* and other nationalist literature from London. In 1910, Barkatullah started two monthly publications called the *Islamic Fraternity* and *Gunjin* from the address 40, Daimachi, Azabu, Tokyo.²⁷⁾ and were financed by the Ottoman Empire.

In October 1911, Barkatullah returned to Tokyo and in December, he converted three Japanese nationals namely Uno Hatano, Hatano's wife, and her father, Baron Kentaro Hiki to Islam.²⁸⁾ Hatano was the assistant editor of Barkatullah's Tokyo based *Islamic Fraternity* from where he also published another paper *El Islam*.²⁹⁾ The British were constantly threatened with Barkatullah's work in Japan. The *Criminal Intelligence Department* (CID) in a desperate attempt to nab Barkatullah, exerted diplomatic pressure to have the *Islamic Fraternity* closed down in 1912.

In late 1905, Tarak Nath Das²⁵⁾ another active revolutionary recruited into an anti-British secret society in order to avoid an arrest, fled India on a livestock carrying French ship and reached Japan. The activities of Indian revolutionaries caused several concerns for the British. The British government in turn pressurized the Japanese government to extradite Das. However, instead of extraditing Das, the Japanese government “unofficially asked him to leave Japan as soon as possible.” It was at this time Das boarded the *Tango Maru* for Seattle. The British were also suspicious about the Japanese intentions in South Asia. However, the *Anglo Japanese Alliance* was renewed in 1905 and 1911. Japan appeared to support Indian nationalism, by tolerating visits by figures involved in Indian nationalistic activities in the transnational space.

In 1913, Sun Yat-Sen, China's best-known revolutionary leader, returned to Japan and Barkatullah with other local Indian revolutionaries maintained their friendship with Sun with the hope that Sun and his followers would sympathize with the Indian demand and provide assistance on various fronts. With the pressure building up on Japan by the British authorities, Barkatullah

was denied tenure and forced to leave Japan in 1914.

During the World War I, secret societies in Bengal and Punjab were gaining momentum where Rash Behari Bose was an active member. R. B. Bose failed in his attempt to assassinate the Governor General Hardinge. Thus to avoid arrest, R. B. Bose escaped to Shanghai and sought the protection of Sun Yat-Sen at a time when China too was busy with the war of liberation and British intelligence spies were alert on all fronts. Sun Yat-Sen took R. B. Bose under his wings and it was from here that R. B. Bose tried to supply arms to India for further revolutionary activities. However since surveillance was extremely strict R. B. Bose's activities were short-lived in China.

Rash Behari Bose escaped British Intelligence in China and reached Japan in 1915 aboard the neutral vessel *Shanuki Maru*, under the impersonation of Raja P.N.T. Tagore, a distant relative of the Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore who had gained considerable prominence in Japan. "Tagore had been scheduled to visit Japan around the middle of 1915, and Rash Behari hit upon the brilliant idea of a perfect disguise...supposedly a secretary proceeding ahead to make preliminary arrangements connected with the visit."³⁰

Upon his arrival in June 1915, R. B. Bose met Lala Lajpat Rai and Sun Yat-Sen who were present in Japan. From 1915 to 1918, he changed residence and identities (as many as 17 time), as the British kept pressing the Japanese government to undertake a nation-wide manhunt and seal his fate through his extradition to India. An extradition order against R. B. Bose was actually issued, and a date fixed for his deportation to India via Shanghai. The intention of the British government was to get him to Shanghai where they could have him arrested under certain extra-territorial rights, which they enjoyed. However before the order could be executed Sun Yat-Sen introduced R. B. Bose to the *Pan-Asianist* leader and the Japanese extreme right wing nationalist Mitsuru Toyama who extended support.

Toyama was greatly impressed by R. B. Bose's fervent patriotism and arranged for his safe asylum in his own house. However, the Japanese police discovered R. B. Bose's presence in Toyama's house and arrived outside to arrest R. B. Bose. Toyama immediately arranged for his escape from the rear exit and sought shelter with the Soma family in Shinjuku.

In the wake of the war in Europe, Japan's policy towards China and Britain took a drastic turn and Japanese interests in China clashed with those of Britain. Anglo-Japanese relations were strained tremendously which in turn proved to be fortunate for R. B. Bose's freedom in Japan. Although technically he was a freeman, he still was under the danger of being nabbed by the British agents. Nevertheless, his connection with the Soma family not only assured him secrecy but also promised him marriage to Toshiko, the eldest daughter of Aizo and Kokkoh Soma, whom he loved deeply. R. B. Bose and Toshiko were married in 1917, and went on to give birth to two children. This strongly rooted R. B. Bose in Japan.

In fact, a dinner party was hosted in honor of R. B. Bose where Toyama Mitsuru of the *Black Dragon Society* and the future Japanese Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi were present. It is true that in 1923 R. B. Bose was naturalized as a Japanese citizen but this he did in order to protect himself from the British, and yet he remained every inch an Indian patriot and carried on his activities till he took his last breath. The strong partnership of Rash Behari Bose and Subhas Chandra Bose persuaded the Japanese authorities to stand by the Indian nationalists and ultimately lend active support for the Indian Freedom struggle.

Rash Behari Bose found the *pan-Asianism* ideology appealing. R. B. Bose and the Okawa Shumei³¹⁾ group organized the *Pan Asiatic Conference* of 1926. At this meeting, representatives of Afghanistan, China, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Japan gathered for the first time under the *pan Asianist* banner. In this first meeting of Asian peoples, Rash Behari Bose made the following speech:

We know some criticize today's meeting saying there is no need to establish another international union because we have one. Nevertheless, the two internationals are completely different in their nature. The one is for the benefit of five hundred millions of the whites and the other is for one hundred and half millions of Asian peoples. For thousands of years, the Easterners were a very superior people in civilization, spirituality and materially...The Union now [sic] we are going to shape a new form of our Eastern civilization. Its basis is on the pure faith and love for Asia. Let us unite and do our best to establish this union at all cost and let us make a big contribution to the happiness of all humanity in propagating our aims and objects all over the world!³²⁾

Tataknath Das who had naturalized as a U.S. citizen in 1914 was an active member of the Ghadr Party and had travelled to Turkey, Germany, China and Japan to organize revolutionaries and disseminate anti-British propaganda. He once again appeared in Japan in 1916 to solicit arms shipment from China to India. R.B. Bose was his link in Japan and Das had made contacts with pan-Asianist Japanese nationalist leaders such as Okuma Shigenobu and Inukai Tsuyoshi through R.B. Bose. Das also created a friendship with Okawa Shumei which resulted in the formation of The Asiatic Association of Japan (Zen Ajiakai in Japanese) the same year. It was through this Association the Das published various anti-British pamphlets.

Tarakanath Das, in 1917, published *Is Japan a Menace to Asia?* from Shanghai.³³⁾ In this work he raises the issue of conflicting interests of British and French with those of the Japanese in Asia. Many copies of the book were sold in Japan and was regarded as magnum opus of the pan Asiatic movement by Shanghai's *The Far Easter Review*.³⁴⁾ The book also received attention especial

among pan-Asianists since it contained an introduction by the Ex-Premier of the Republic of China Tong Shao-yi and an appendix by the Ichihiro Tokutomi, proprietor and Chief Editor of the 'Kokumin Shimbun' newspaper, and also Member of the House of Peers of Japan. The British were quick to proscribe this book. A Japanese version of *Isolation of Japan in World Politics* written by Das and translated by Okawa Shumei was published by the Zen Ajiakai in 1917 followed by its English version the following year.³⁵⁾

The pan-Asianist engagement of Indian revolutionaries also attracted Raja Mahendra Pratap to Japan in 1925.³⁶⁾ Pratap had formed a provisional government of India in exile, The Government of Hindustan on December 1, 1915 in Kabul with himself as the President and this was supported for a short while by the Ottoman military leader Enver Pasha. Following the closing down of the Provisional Government in Kabul Pratap surfaced in Japan and worked with Rash Behari Bose.³⁷⁾ In Japan Pratap formed an India League, the Eastern Oppressed Peoples' Association under Sun yat-Sen's influence. He also published a paper titled *Ghadar Dhandora* as a vehicle for revolutionary propaganda.³⁸⁾

On March 12, 1928, A. M. Nair aboard the *Suwa Maru* reached Kobe and went on to join the engineering degree course of *Kyoto Imperial University*. Moreover, in early April he visited Tokyo and met Rash Behari Bose. Nair in his memoirs mentions, "I had heard much about him and his work in India and also of his continued activities in Japan in the cause of India's freedom. I was keen to meet him and his family in Shinjuku." With this in the backdrop, Subhas Chandra Bose arrived on the scene of Indian Politics.

Direct contacts with Japan and the Indian nationalist struggle was possible through students coming to Japan as well as political activists. As for students, they had limited access and means to carry on fully-fledged activities in Japan. This was owing to their short stay and limited resources, further partially due to the *Anglo Japanese Alliance*. However, the *India Houses*, formations of Societies, and Associations gave the students a voice and a channel to forge relationships. The lack of a leader among the students was another factor that restricted the momentum of the revolutionary activities in the early phase in Japan.

II: *NETAJI'S ALLIANCE WITH JAPAN*

British India suffered heavy losses in the form of young lives during and after World War I. Within India, a widespread influenza epidemic took its toll. To consolidate as a strong front various nationalist movements prior to the war settled their differences to form a strong INC.

Trade and commerce, which was, then at the mercy of the British Raj too suffered disruption. The British authorities were busy restructuring policies and enacting new laws. One such law on the principle of diarchy introduced was the *Government of India Act 1919*, in which both elected Indian legislators and appointed British officials shared power. A tough approach to prevent sedition activity topped the agenda. The Indian revolutionaries as well as the rulers of the Raj learned lessons. Time flew by as the moderates under the leadership of Gandhi tried to persuade the British government through non-violent means. A lack of pragmatic approach and failure on the part of the *INC* triggered the sentiments of certain sections of Indians living in India and abroad. The revolutionary movements, however did not enjoy the same leadership and means as that prior to the war. Germany too was recuperating the loss in the war and Indian revolutionaries in different parts of the world slowly took time to recover.

Prior to *Netaji's* arrival in Japan he had gained luminous prominence in India as well as in Germany. Gupta states, "Subhas Chandra Bose who had just returned from a tour of Europe, fought an election inside the organization against Gandhi's candidate and won. Nevertheless, Gandhi ultimately had his way and Bose had to go. He thus defeated democracy with the democracy."³⁹⁾ Independently S. C. Bose started a revolution against the British, which was a combination of Socialism and Fascism.⁴⁰⁾

Subhas Chandra Bose formed the *Forward Bloc* a progressive faction within the *INC* in May 1939 and through his fiery speeches he organized to rally all the left wing sections within the Congress, ushering an alternate leadership. World War II broke out in September 1939 and British India took the position of a pro-War state. Through his paper the *Forward Block*, S. C. Bose gained popularity and within the next few months, he was seen touring India gathering a large following. More than a year had passed and S. C. Bose's campaign obtained national significance with the first *All India Conference* in Nagpur. A resolution titled 'All Power to Indian People', urging militant action for struggle against colonial rule was passed, and S. C. Bose was elected as Party president and a mass movement against the employment of Indian resources and men for the cause of World War II was established. Subsequently S. C. Bose was arrested on sedition charges and while under house arrest from India and strict surveillance, he escaped from India and went into exile. After having trudged through several countries via mountainous routes and harsh weather conditions, S. C. Bose relentlessly reached Germany on March 28, 1941. This escapade took him to Soviet Union via Afghanistan and finally under the guise of Senor Orlando Mazzotta and an Italian passport he made it to Berlin. This started his exile cum revolution in the transnational space. Moreover, with the arrival of S. C. Bose as the leader, Germany once again emerged as a platform for Indian revolutionary activities with newer means and strategies.⁴¹⁾

In November 1941, Subhas Chandra Bose established the *Free India Centre* and *Azad Hind*

Radio also known as the *Free India Radio* in Berlin. The memorandum of *Free India Centre* laid down four regulations, which are as follows:

1. Jai Hind⁴²⁾ would be the salutation to greet one another.
2. The Patriotic song 'Jana Gana Mana'⁴³⁾ would be the national Anthem of Azad Hind.
3. Hindustani or Hindi would be the official language of Azad Hind.
4. Henceforth, Subhas Chandra Bose would be referred to as Netaji⁴⁴⁾

In the first broadcast on *Azad Hind Radio* from Germany, he made a stunning revelation that shocked everyone including the British: "This is Subhas Chandra Bose speaking over to you over the Azad Hind Radio...now the hour has struck, I come forward to speak..."⁴⁵⁾

With these words, *Netaji* disclosed his real identity and shed his 'Mazzotta garb', which had protected *Netaji* from the time his exile had begun. He further stated:

"I solemnly declare on behalf of all freedom-loving Indians in India and abroad that we shall continue to fight British Imperialism till India is once again the mistress of her destiny. During this struggle and in the reconstruction that will follow, we shall heartily cooperate with all those who will help us in overthrowing the common enemy. I am confident that in this sacred struggle, the vast majority of Indian people will be with us."⁴⁶⁾

The next step was to form a military unit that would comprise of Indian prisoners of war (POW's) scattered around various countries in Europe. This force got the name *Azad Hind Fauj*, meaning *Indian National Army*. Joyce Lebra mentions that, "though Bose was without any previous military experience, he got his training and discipline German-style, along with the soldiers of the Indian Legion."⁴⁷⁾

By the end of December 1942, the army reached strength of four battalions and reached a figure around three thousand five hundred men by mid 1942. *Netaji* had established good relations with Japanese military attaché Colonel Yamamoto Bin posted in Berlin. It was through Yamamoto that *Netaji* was introduced to Ambassador Lieutenant General, Oshima Hiroshi. The trio had discussions over Japanese assistance to India in gaining freedom and later Japan suggested that a tripartite declaration could be made possible on India.

In the meanwhile, In February 1942, Singapore fell to the Japanese army advancing from Malay. Japan's victory led Major Fujiwara to receive the POW's from Colonel Hunt who was their officer-in-command at an official ceremony held at Farrar Park. In turn, Major Fujiwara handed Captain Mohan Singh of the Indian Contingents their charge.

Capt. Mohan Singh inspired his newly acquired troops and revealed to them his intention of

converting them into the *INA*, which was to fight the British in India. Mohan Singh immediately convened meetings at Singapore, which was attended by well-placed Indians in and around the region. At one of the meetings held on March 9, 10 Rash Behari Bose too was present.

On June 5, another conference was held in Bangkok, which was attended by members of the *Indian Independence League (IIL)* from various countries in Asia. The rigorous nine-day conference ended with decisions to formulate policies that would govern the independence movement in East Asia with its headquarters in Singapore. The IIL took the reins of the independence movement and the *INA* was pronounced the official military organization of the movement. The commander in chief was Mohan Singh and the President of the Council of Action was none other than R. B. Bose.

Via a message to the President of the Reception Committee of the Bangkok Conference, *Netaji* said:

I am delighted to have your message inviting me to your Conference which is going to meet under the distinguished Presidentship of the revolutionary leader Rash Behari Bose... The branches of the Azad Hind Sangha (Group) in Europe also associate with me in sending this message... In this historic struggle all nationalists, whether in India or outside, must play their part. The experience I have gained during the last 18 months has convinced me that in our fight against British Imperialism the Tripartite Powers are our best friends and allies in and outside India and I have no doubt that they will gladly render us such assistance as we may need. But the emancipation of India must be the work of primarily of Indians themselves ...It is now time to link up all India nationalists all over the world in one all-embracing organization...Inquilab Zindabad! Azad Hind Zindabad!¹⁴⁸⁾ (Long live revolution! Long live Free India!)

With this message not only did *Netaji* reach out to the members attending the Conference but also urged all Indians near and far to make a joint effort in shaking of the yolk of the British Raj.

However, the IIL was dissolved due to some differences of opinions among core members such as R. B. Bose, Mohan Singh, and Colonel Gill. In the consequent year a new army was under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Bhonsle came into existence.

In the meanwhile, *Netaji* was atop the submarine he had boarded from Germany. The Japanese sent another submarine I-29 from Penang that united with the one carrying *Netaji* to transport him to a secretive island off Sumatra. On his arrival he was well received by his old friend Col. Yamamoto from Germany days, who had now assumed the position as head of the

Hikari Kikan.⁴⁹⁾

Escorted by Yamamoto, *Netaji* finally landed in Tokyo on the May 16, 1943. *Netaji* had disguised himself and taken the persona of a Japanese VIP named Matsuda.⁵⁰⁾ In the following days, *Netaji* met with heads of the Japanese Army, Navy, as well as the Ministers for Navy and Foreign Affairs followed by a final meeting with the Prime Minister Tojo Hideki. Prime Minister Tojo initially decline declined meeting with *Netaji* on reasons of 'work pressure' and had a first meeting under an atmosphere of distinct reservations, which took place after a long wait of twenty days. However, during this period Rash Behari Bose promptly joined *Netaji*, briefed him about the political currents in Japan, and handed over to him the leadership of the Indian independence Movement in the Far East. Tojo met with *Netaji* a second time after four days and they discussed the basic concept of the GEACS. Two days later on June 16, *Netaji* was invited to visit the Diet where Tojo surprised him by making a speech, which announced the following declaration:

We are indignant about the fact that India is still under the ruthless suppression of Britain and are in full sympathy with her desperate struggle for independence. We are determined to extend every possible assistance to the cause of India's independence. It is our belief that the day is not far off when India will enjoy freedom and prosperity after winning independence.⁵¹⁾ India will enjoy freedom and prosperity after winning independence.⁵²⁾

This assured Japan's total support to the grand scheme of *Netaji*. With Japan taken care of, *Netaji* left Japan with R. B. Bose and proceeded for Singapore. On his arrival in Singapore on June 27, Indian revolutionaries in an atmosphere of excitement and aspiration welcomed him. At a general assembly held a week later in a place packed beyond its capacity two thousand delegates in chorus sang the Indian national Anthem, *Jana Gana Mana*. Followed by R. B. Bose publicly handing command of the *INA* to *Netaji* with the following speech:

Friends! This is one of the happiest moments in my life. I have brought you one of the most outstanding personalities of our great Motherland to participate in our campaign. In your presence today, I resign my office as president, of the Indian Independence League in East Asia. From now on, Subhas Chandra Bose is your president, your leader in the fight for India's independence, and I am confident that under his leadership, you will march onto battle and to victory.

With this Rash Behari officially withdrew from the forefront only to lend full support to *Netaji* in the background.⁵³⁾ After the meeting *Netaji* and Rash Behari Bose met with the Commander-in -Chief, Supreme Command of Japanese Armies in the South, General Count Terauchi Juichi at his headquarters in Singapore. Terauchi was extremely pleased to meet him and conversed with *Netaji* in German over various issues. This meeting resulted in a loyal friendship between the two until the sudden disappearance of *Netaji*.

The following day *Netaji* renamed the IIL to *Azad Hind Fauj*. Here he addressed the gathered Army comprising of 13,000 officers and left them spellbound by the famous speech as follows:

Soldiers of India's Army of Liberation!...This is not only the Army that will emancipate India from the British yoke, it is also the army that will, hereafter, create the future national army of Free India. Every Indian must feel proud that this army, his own army, has been organized entirely under Indian leadership and that when the historic moment arrives, under Indian leadership it will go to battle...even a child is convinced that the almighty British empire is already a thing of the past.

Netaji further enunciated:

When France declared war on Germany in 1939 and the campaign began, there was but one cry which rose from the lips of German soldiers-'To Paris, To Paris!' When the brave soldiers of Nippon set out on their march in December 1941, there was but one cry... 'To Singapore, To Singapore!' Comrades! My soldiers! Let your battle-cry be-'To Delhi, To Delhi!'⁵⁴⁾

The idea of the march 'to Delhi' received an overwhelming response. This was followed by *Netaji* traveling to other areas in South East Asia where the Indian diaspora had spread. Wherever he went he inspired the crowds with his enigmatic personality and fiery speeches. People flocked around him after his speeches and poured out their all in the form of money and valuables as donations towards *Netaji*'s plans.

It was on this expedition that the Provisional Government of Free India was formed with *Netaji* as supreme commander of the army, the Prime Minister. Axis Powers and their allies namely, Japan, Burma Croatia, Germany, the Philippines, Nanking, China, Manchu, Italy and Siam promptly offered their recognition of the Provisional government.

On his return to Japan Prime Minister Tojo placed the islands of Andaman and Nicobar under the jurisdiction of *Netaji*'s Provisional Government.

The first decision of the *Provisional Government* was to wage a war against British India with the Japanese battalions officially codenamed Operation 'U' by the Japanese. Imphal was decided on as the strategic location to launch the attack via Burma. Subsequent to the execution orders on January 7, 1944 the army began their training and preparations followed in full swing. General Mataguchi set the beginning of the Imphal campaign to March 15. On April 6 the town of Kohima was captured and Tojo was promised *Netaji* all conquered areas of India under the jurisdiction of the *Netaji*'s provisional government. However, to the chagrin of the troops all further plans were disrupted due to unfavorable climatic conditions with the setting in of the monsoon.

Matters worsened and more than half the strength of both the armies went lame. All modes of communication were broken and *Netaji* was left without any news of the front. With no further hope or options left on July 8, Prime Minister Tojo on the advice of Kawabe and Mataguchi, issued orders to halt the operation. A startled *Netaji*, however, ordered to continue with the march with or without Japan. However, areas under the jurisdiction of *INA* in Burma once again fell into the hands of the British thus leaving the *INA* in a state of failure. Among the various events that followed was the untimely disappearance of *Netaji* in a plane crash on August 18, 1945 over Formosa three days after the surrender of Japan in the war. His loss left the *INA* without a leader and handicapped the entire *INA* who were subsequently was tried⁵⁵⁾ at Red Fort in Delhi. This sudden shock put a full stop to the revolutionary movements across the transnational space. Ironically, it was two years after the Japanese surrender that India achieved independence from the British on August 15, 1947.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we saw how the revolutionary movement of India's freedom struggle established contacts with a base in the Far East. From sojourners to settlers, the Indians in the diaspora went through the process of migration and creation of societies. They formed excellent networks, which not only facilitated in easing the hardships faced as new settlers but also contributed to their original homelands in a profound way. Although various schemes to obtain independence and drive the British out of India failed on a larger platform, the revolutionaries were able to create a considerable impact on the British, by arousing patriotic fervor, educating the host societies as well as members in the diaspora. The *India Houses*, formed by Krishnararma and other revolutionaries were not only operational bases for their activities, but served as religious and cultural centers. Through patriotic songs, literature, and lectures they kept alive the spirit of revolution and enjoyed a sense of 'long distance nationalism.'

During World War I, the Indian revolutionaries sought to take advantage of German help in the form of schemes, strategies, and war materials to free their homeland through an armed revolt. However, the attempt was not a success. During World War II Subhas Chandra Bose with the partnership of Rash Behari Bose followed the same route and created the INA. In spite of acquiring a fraction of the British India through brilliant planning, the violent campaigns of Netaji did not materialize. The revolutionaries managed to enroll the support of other parallel revolutionary movements and assisted them in their activities. Japan in Asia is one example. None of these scored a direct success, however a few would deny that their capacity to challenge the British Empire was enormous and the role of the revolutionaries in the transnational space as well the external support of other countries is significant and cannot be sidelined.

Notes

- 1) Gou Toshi: 1944
- 2) Daitoa kyoeiken in Japanese, was a policy introduced by imperial Japan proclaiming that its design was intended to promote co-prosperity of East Asia by putting an end to the long lasting Western imperialism in Asia by establishing the pan-Asian idea "Asia for the Asians"; GEACS henceforth.
- 3) Provisional Government-in-exile founded on October 21, 1943 in Singapore with political, military, and monetary support from Imperial Japan.
- 4) Subhas Chandra Bose's death has been gripped with mystery, controversy and has sparked many a debates. Initially triggered by the rejection of the news by Lord Wavell and Lord Mountbatten some believe that the mystery of Bose's death remains unsolved even today. India had commissioned a high-level inquiry into the matter at two instances, well known as the *Shah Nawaz Committee* and *Justice Khosla Committee*; which approved Bose's death but failed to provide conclusive evidence. While the Japanese Government and Indian official opinion alike, maintain the 'Taihoku air-crash incident' as the official version while some agree to disagree. See (Dhar: 2012)
- 5) This category of was represented by conservative colonial administrators and Imperialist School of historians. See Valentine Chirol's "*Indian Unrest*"; Justice Rowlatt's *Sedition Committee Report*, 1918.
- 6) As the name suggests, the post-independence period saw the rise and establishment of this School employing the Marxist approach. See D.D. Kosambi "*An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*"; R. Palme Dutt's, "*India Today*"; "*Social Background of Indian Nationalism*" by A.R. Desai.
- 7) This School represented mostly by political activists' highlights the formation of the Indian National Congress, and its role in the Independence movement and, emphasizes on the exploitative character of colonialism. For an interpretation See A.C. Mazumdar "*Indian National Evolution*", Surendranath Banerjee "*A Nation in the Making*", C.R. Das "*India for Indians*", C.F. Andrews and Girija Mookerjee "*The Rise and Growth of the Congress in India, 1938*".
- 8) Scholars following this trend insist on viewing the Movement from the position of the layperson and refutes any entity such as the Indian National Movement. See Ranajit Guha's "*Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*".
- 9) *Purna Swaraj* meaning absolute self-government; complete independence from British Rule.

- 10) See T.R. Sareen's "Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad." 1979.
Singh, *Puran Singh: A Life Sketch*, 1993.
Established as Tokyo Vocational School (*Tokyo shikkou gakkou in Japanese*) in 1881. In 1890 renamed to Tokyo Technical School (*Tokyo kougyou gakkou in Japanese*) and in 1901 to Tokyo Higher Technical School (*Tokyo koutou kogyo gakko in Japanese*). Originally founded by the government of Japan to cultivate human resources to develop modern industrial technology to keep up with the West.
See Sareen, *Indian Revolutionaries, Japan and British Imperialism*. 1993, 8.
- 11) Brahmo Samajist leader, Protap Chunder Moozmdar known for his work the *Oriental Christ*
- 12) Founder of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission from Bengal, Swami Vivekananda the Vedantist,
- 13) See Sareen, *Japan and the Indian National Army*, 8. Quoted from "India and Japan: Dimension of their Relations. (New Delhi, 1986. 21-22.)" by P.A. NarasimhaMurthy
- 14) Besides Japanese language skills one had to acquire proficiency in German, since it was at the time the medium of instruction for science and technology in Japan.
- 15) Details on Puran Singh have been garnered from, "Life and Works of Puran Singh " (Virk, H.S. 1993)
- 16) Swami Ram Tirtha was among the first notable teachers of Hinduism to lecture in the United States, travelling there in 1902 and must be on the same trip that he visited Japan. Sareen: 1993. Swami Ram Tirtha was preceded by Swami Vivekananda in 1893 who had also visited Osaka, Kyoto and Tokyo while on his way to the *World Conference of Religions* to be held in Chicago.
- 17) In a preface to the First Edition of a ' volume book series on the works of Swami Ram Tirtha titled 'In Woods of God Realization – Swami Ram Tirtha' Puran Singh
- 18) Maya Puran Singh: 1993.
- 19) Sareen: 1993, 8.
- 20) Abdul Hafiz Mohamed Barkatullah, an Islamic scholar known with his honorific as Maulana Barkatullah is among those revolutionaries who fought for Indian Independence from outside India.
- 21) Ganachari: 2005, 142.
- 22) Ibid.
- 23) Ibid 142-143.
- 24) Refer to document DCI, 13.3. 1909, B. April 1909, Nos. 103-110. in A. C. Bose *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad: 1905-1927*. p. 74-75
- 25) Bengali revolutionary active mainly in the United States; Japan.
- 26) Ganachari, 2005: 137-139; Bose; 2002), 80.
- 27) Hartford Seminary Foundation, *The Muslim World: A Quarterly Review of Current Events, Literature, and Thought among Mohammedans and the Progress of Christian Missions in Moslem Lands*, vol. IV (London: Christian Literature Society For India, 1914), 312.
- 28) Ibid
- 29) Ibid; Deepak: 2001, 49, Original source from Foreign Department Proceedings. Secret-I July 1913, No.54, National Archives of India;
- 30) Nair: 1983, 55
- 31) Ōkawa Shūmei (1886-1957) Japanese nationalist, *pan-Asianist* and Islamic scholar.
- 32) As appeared in Ohsawa: 1954, 27-38.
- 33) Das: *Is Japan a menace to Asia?*. Shanghai: The author, 1917.

- 34) Mukherjee: *Taraknath Das*, 1998, 101-103.
- 35) Mukherjee: *Taraknath Das*, 1998, 104-105; Saaler and Szpilman, *Pan Asianism: A Documentary History*, Volume I: 1850-1920, 306.
- 36) Raja Mahendra Pratap (1886-1979) was an Indian revolutionary, journalist and writer. Pratap left India to rally support for India's liberation. In January 1915 Pratap was in Switzerland, then through his contacts with Virendra Chattopadhyaya of the Berlin India Club he met Kaiser Wilhelm II who decorated Pratap with the Order of the Red Eagle and promised his support for Indian independence. Pratap proceeded to Afghanistan as a part of the *Niederman-Hentig Expedition* for the purpose of encouraging Afghanistan to declare full independence from the British backed by the Ottoman-German Alliance during World War I. Other members included Barkatullah and Chempakaran Pillai.
- 37) Saaler and Szpilman, Vol 2: 1920-Present. 2011, 108.
- 38) National Archives of India, Home Political files (NAI/HP), 29/1927, 3.45. As cited by Vir Singh in *Raja Mahendra Pratap*. 2005, 60; n.38.
- 39) Manmath Nath Gupta, *History of the Indian Revolutionary Movement* (Bombay: Somaiya Publications, 1972).
- 40) Leonard A. Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj: A Biography of Indian Nationalists Sarat and Subhas Chandra Bose* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1997), 234.
- 41) During World War I Indian revolutionaries belonging to the Ghadr Party had garnered support and sympathy of the Germans and a collaborative effort to organize an armed revolution in India was planned. However it ended in an unsuccessful fiasco.
- 42) *Meaning Victory to India*.
- 43) Written by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, this was later maintained and adopted as the official national Anthem of India in 1947.
- 44) *Meaning Leader*.
- 45) Bose and Bose: 2004, 12.
- 46) Bose and Bose: 2004, 12.
- 47) Lebra: 1971, 110
- 48) Bose and Bose: 2004, 108-109.
- 49) Hikari Kikan was an organ of psychological warfare, which was to function as an advisory group to the INA.
- 50) Bose: 1973, 138.
- 51) Bose: 1973, 140.
- 52) Bose: 1973, 140
- 53) Sivaram: 1967, 122-123.
- 54) Bose: 1973, 148-149.
- 55) For a detailed account of the INA Trial See S. Subuhey, *The Story Of I. N. A.: Being an Account of the Indian National Army, the Azad Hind Government and the Trial of Their Officers in the Red Fort* (Lahore: Atma Ram & Sons Lahore, 1946).

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